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## Letter from the President

I am delighted to welcome you to the premiere issue of the Initial Tropical Plants newsletter – an opportunity to communicate with you about news and issues that affect the workplace, your brand and even personal health and well-being.

Every quarter, we will bring you an insider's view on what's happening in our industry, whether it's the ongoing effects of last year's horrendous hurricane season, ways to improve your interior landscape, intriguing glimpses into the growth of exotic plants, and more.

If you'd like to receive these quarterly newsletters electronically, all you need to do is sign up by [clicking here](#). And while you're there, check out valuable information including the latest research on the multitude of benefits of incorporating plants into your workplace. Since the content will be regularly freshened, don't forget to bookmark the page and return to it often.

Remember – this is your newsletter. So please feel free to contact Michelle Rodwell, our Director of Marketing, [mrodwell@initialplants.com](mailto:mrodwell@initialplants.com) if you have any ideas or articles that you wish to see in future editions. Again, welcome! It's just the start of a new kind of budding relationship with our favorite people – our valued customers.



## Finding the Silver Lining in the Storm by Ken Brewer

The hurricane season of 2005 was the costliest and most disruptive ever recorded for Florida agriculture and horticulture, with losses to crops and structures exceeding \$2.2 billion. Every area south of Orlando – more than 98% of the state's foliage production area – was hit hard by nature's fury.

The plant growers are rebounding, but it's going to be slow going for this season. In fact, many firms are temporarily closed pending their ability to get cleaned up and start growing again. Just consider:

- Bromeliad and orchid growers – including Kerry's Orchids and Bromeliads, the largest in the state – are urging buyers to be flexible since these plants will be in tight supply for six to eight months.



## Hurricane... continued

- Foliage growers are stressing that larger plants may be in very tight supply since these plants take time to replant and regrow.
- Growers in the Apopka-Orlando area are crossing their fingers as they recover from a brief, unforecasted cold spell. Any replays could strain limited availability.

There are no secret stashes of plants; many will be in short supply for months. Some brokers have already

increased prices by 10% to 20% as production costs rise. Pots, fertilizer, shade cloth, fiberglass, and more are in very tight supply.

The key to success is being flexible in your requests. For the near future, please allow for substitute or alternate choices and know that no one has inventory selections like they had before. Together, we can weather the aftermath of the hurricanes until our growers get back on track.

## Can A Building Be Truly Green Without Plants? by Jeff Mariola

When you think about what constitutes a "green building," does the presence of interior plants factor prominently? In fact, even though most people assume that a green building houses a lot of greenery, the non-profit industry defines it in far more black and white terms. In 2000, the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) developed LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) to provide a guideline for the design and construction of sustainable, environmentally friendly buildings. That guideline became centered around five green design categories: sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, and indoor environmental quality. Interestingly, the one criterion that was not factored in was the incorporation of indoor plants.

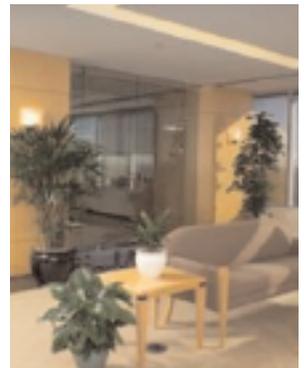
As president of Initial Tropical Plants, North America's largest provider of interior landscaping, design installation and maintenance services, I see the restorative power of plants in action each and every day. Plants, after all, are natural born air filters that absorb impurities in the air and transfer toxins to the soil. In the summer, they continually spin off moisture into the air and take in oxygen, lowering cooling costs. In the winter, plants act as humidifiers and increase the level of moisture in the dry air. All year round, plants help individuals improve overall health and well-being.

### Green Buildings Can Help Employees Stay In The Pink

The U.S. Department of Energy reports that green building practices help create environmentally sound, resource-efficient buildings through an integrated design approach. Among other benefits, green

buildings offer a healthy and comfortable environment and support resource conservation, including energy efficiency, renewable energy and water conservation features. So, while the green building movement is clearly still in its infancy, more and more companies are realizing the benefits to going green – reduced operating costs, improved employee productivity, and lowered absenteeism.

Until governments here and abroad offer significant incentives to build green by lowering property taxes for green buildings, for example, or providing easier planning consents, the road to a healthier green building world will be riddled with potholes. The Canadian Government's Commercial Buildings Incentive Scheme provides fiscal compensation for developers who satisfy certain green building standards. The government of South Australia requires that all new office buildings they lease meet green building 'Green Star' rating standards. Perhaps, the United States will someday offer its own governmental incentives. Until then it is up to each developer to listen to his or her conscience, as well as customers, and proactively incorporate green building standards. Adding plants to the interior office mix is a very important first low-cost step in "building green."



## Going Green at Home

### Top 5 Plant Tips

1. Position your plants in well lit areas. It's difficult to give most plants too much light indoors.
2. Water thoroughly with bath temperature water. Your plants will appreciate it.
3. Don't allow your plants to stand in drainage water. A few hours is OK, a few days is not.
4. Use a houseplant food regularly. Follow the instructions, but apply at half the manufacturers recommended rate.
5. Keep your plants groomed and clean. Remove old leaves and dead twigs. Use a soft cloth with warm water to wipe leaf surfaces free from dust and residue.

Check out  
our new  
web site

[www.initialplants.com](http://www.initialplants.com)

## Featured Service Technicians

Every quarter, we'll introduce you to members of our service team who have excelled in changing the landscape of business interiors. This time, we're proud to introduce you to our 2005 President's Club Partner Team.



**Angie Witt**

**Service level:** Gold

**Years of service:** 20

**Location:** Knoxville, Tenn.

**Best part of the job:** The spontaneity of living in the moment

**A little bit of what she thinks:** "Unlike other surroundings – computers, faxes, business machinery – plants are alive and people sense that. All the time, I get comments like, "I'd love to have your job...it looks like so much fun...I really want to know how to take care of plants like you do." It makes me realize I'm doing a great service for them!"



**Fancye (Eva) Scarbrough**

**Service level:** Silver

**Years of service:** 8

**Location:** Knoxville, Tenn.

**Best part of the job:** It's always changing... never dull!

**A little bit of what she thinks:** "Plants help people relax in their workplace because they make it feel like a home environment. I often hear customers say, "Your service is always prompt and consistent. You are like a breath of fresh air. How do I get a job like yours?" It never fails to make me feel good!"